

SERA Winter Business Meeting 2009

Detailed Minutes - Treasurer's Report

SERA Winter Business Meeting 2009 - Hosted by the East Tennessee Grotto - March 7th 2009 Oak Ridge Civic Center Oak Ridge, TN

The East Tennessee Grotto (ETG) hosted the 2009 SERA Winter Business Meeting on March 7, 2009 at the Oak Ridge Civic Center in Oak Ridge, Anderson County, Tennessee. Robert Packett led ETG in sponsoring a well-organized and well-planned meeting with excellent accommodations.

Registration and Salon set-up began at 0830 hours (hrs). At 0900 hrs, SERA Chairman John Attaway called the meeting to order and introduced the host grotto. Robert Packett made some introductory remarks, including information about the Civic Center, lunch plans, and cave trip plans.

Brent Aulenbach introduced the SERA Map Salon. This event represented the 15th annual salon. Brent displayed five maps; two for show, three for competition. Lynn Roebuck introduced the Fine Arts Salon. Both Brent and Lynn requested more entries next year.

Brian Roebuck reported on the SERA Newsletter, *The Southeastern Caver*, and he brought a box of copies. Brian requested more articles and described available material as "sparse."

John Attaway provided the Chairman's report: A good year for SERA; however, John noted that we now face bat diseases (White Nose Syndrome) and that the 2008 SERA-VAR was hot and poorly attended.

Anne Elmore provided the Vice-Chairman Report: No activity as Vice Chairman; however, Anne noted that more grottos other than the Sewanee Mountain Grotto should be represented at the executive table. Anne also tooted the SERA Karst Task Force (SKTF) clean-up effort on Coal Bank Road (near Blue Spring Cave, White County, Tennessee), which Anne led; the clean-up recovered 14 tons of solid waste.

John Hoffelt provided the Secretary Report. On March 4, 2009, the NSS notified SERA that the Clayton County Cavers grotto (No. 000285) in Georgia was deactivated. The NSS received no response from the grotto after repeated contact attempts, and the grotto did not file a 2008 Internal Organization Report. No one spoke for the Clayton County Cavers at the 2009 SERA Winter Business Meeting.

John Hoffelt read the minutes of the 2008 SERA Winter Business Meeting. Jim Wilbanks prepared the minutes, and the minutes are posted on the SERA Website. The Clock Tower

Grotto (Georgia) noted one correction regarding their clean-up of Parkers Cave, not Talley Cave. The minutes were approved as amended; John will contact Brent Allen, SERA Webmaster regarding the necessary change.

John Hoffelt next provided the Treasurer Report. The balance forward provided by Jim Wilbanks in June 2008 was \$739.32. SERA generated no income due to a monetary loss by the 2008 SERA Cave Carnival. More discussion on this topic follows. SERA incurred \$273.83 in expenses for the webspace, administrative items (ledger, checks), and awards. John reported the balance as \$465.66.

ED Note: At the 2009 SERA Winter Business Meeting, the award committees did not select 3 awards, and Brian Roebuck provided a debit of \$32.93 for *The Southeastern Caver*. On March 16, 2009, John Hoffelt produced a revised balance of \$582.73.

Maureen Handler provided the SERA Karst Task Force (SKTF) Report. The SKTF was very busy in 2008. They helped the Sewanee Mountain Grotto in April with cleaning up the Russell Cave Watershed (Alabama and Tennessee) along Orme Mountain Road. In November and again in February (2009), they cleaned up in the Blue Spring Watershed (Tennessee) along Coal Bank Road. The Blue Spring effort produced a one-day record of 9 tons of scrap metal, and the combined total for November and February was 13.8 tons. This netted the SKTF \$33 from recycling the metal.

The SKTF held 3 board meetings through the year. They are developing a DVD concerning karst watershed protection. When funded, 4 editions of the DVD will be produced for different age groups, and the DVD will be distributed for free.

The SKTF operated a booth at the TAG Fall Cave-In, and they plan to do so again and at the SERA Cave Carnival in 2009. The next board meeting is at Maureen's house on March 29, 2009.

Continuing with reports, John Attaway called for a report of the 2008 Summer Cave Carnival from the Mountain Empire Grotto (MEG). No one responded for the MEG. John Hoffelt reported that according to the Appalachian Karst Conservancy, MEG lost money on the Cave Carnival. Mudpuppy (Peter Michaud – Sewanee Mountain Grotto) moved that SERA adopt the policy of forgiving the \$1.50 per participant tax if the host grotto loses money on the event. This motion was tabled until the afternoon discussion.

Jody Bailey (Nashville Grotto) provided a report on the upcoming 2009 SERA Cave Carnival to be held May 28 – 31, 2009 at The Little River Camp on the Mountain (the TAG Fall Cave-In site) in Georgia. Jody reported that circumstances led the grotto to the TAG site because of financial issues. Jody announced that the theme for the Cave Carnival would be Carnivál, and the event would include a Mardis Crawl Parade. Also, various fun games and events would be held with fabulous prizes at stake. John Hoffelt had T-shirts for sale to support the cave carnival and for the ICS-NSS convention in Texas.

Mudpuppy reported on plans for the 2010 SERA Summer Cave Carnival, to be held June 16-20, 2010, at a private camp (where Thunder on the Mountain – a motorcycle rally – is held) near Monteagle, Tennessee.

Under “Old Business”, Mark Joop (Southeastern Cave Conservancy) provided an update on the Summer Cave Carnival Enhancement Committee. Only 4 surveys were returned to Mark. Based on the low response, Mark moved to dissolve the committee, but to keep the information on the SERA website updated for hosting grottos to reference. Michael Gilbert (Central Alabama Grotto) objected saying he wanted to keep the committee to provide guidance and suggestions to improve the carnival. Chris Kerr (Smoky Mountain Grotto) concurred stipulating encouragement for smaller grottos to host. Maureen Handler (SKTF) suggested using a SERA officer as a carnival liaison to the host grotto. Mark Joop moved, Jim Wilbanks (Chattanooga Grotto) seconded, that the enhancement committee be dissolved and a new committee form. The issue was tabled until the afternoon session.

Chrys Hulbert (Nashville Grotto) presented information on the White Nose Syndrome (WNS) affecting bats in the eastern US. The disease is spreading and headed to Tennessee. There were several questions following the presentation, including the role of show caves, whether they would close or provide public awareness information. It was noted that no show caves visited knew about WNS, nor did they provide any information. A suggestion was made to update the SERA website with information. Also, a call was made for SERA to send a letter to the NSS Show Caves Liaison to encourage show caves to educate the show cave owners and operators and to encourage public education at the show caves.

- Action Items:
- Update SERA Website with WNS information
 - Write letter to NSS Show Caves Liaison

Chrys passed a bat bowl for contributions to the NSS WNS Rapid Response Fund (a dedicated fund to support WNS research). The collection brought \$45.00 for the fund.

Beginning the “New Business” segment of the meeting, John Attaway introduced the SERA Award Committees. Two members of the Larry S. Adams Landowner Appreciation Award were not present, so John appointed Mudpuppy and Jim Wilbanks to fill those award seats. John also called for Meritorious Award nominations.

Before breaking for lunch, Cheryl Pratt (East Tennessee Grotto) announced the clean-up at Conner Creek Cave on Sunday. Lunch break began at 11:30 a.m.

The afternoon session began at 1:00 p.m. John Hoffelt called the organizational roll. The following organizations and representatives were in attendance:

Central Alabama Grotto – Nathan Gatlin
Chattanooga Grotto – Jim Wilbanks

Clock Tower Grotto – Brad Barker
Dogwood City Grotto – Bill Stringfellow
East Tennessee Grotto – Cheryl Pratt
Georgia Speleological Survey – Nancy Aulenbach
Huntsville Grotto – Avis Moni
Nashville Grotto – Jody Bailey
Sewanee Mountain Grotto -- Mudpuppy
Smoky Mountain Grotto – Chris Kerr
Southport Chronic Cavers – Lynn Roebuck
Spencer Mountain Grotto – Anne Elmore
Tennessee Cave Survey – Gerald Moni
Southeastern Cave Conservancy – Mark Joop

The organization representatives (listed above) provided the following organizational reports:

CAG – Reports a good year – continue to work the Talladega race event; 11 people attended a grotto trip to Yellowstone National Park; November 6-8, 2008 co-host with Birmingham Grotto the NSS Board of Governors Meeting in Birmingham, Alabama

Chattanooga – Now meeting at the Chattanooga Nature Center; there, they rappel off the building and clean windows/building; bought a new projection system; Jerry Wallace is Chairman; 50-60 members

Clock Tower – Grotto goes caving a lot; cleaned-up Talley Cave, coordinated with the SKTF, and tracked over \$10,000 worth of Volunteer Value Time; they are teaching new cavers how to survey caves; on behalf of the Pigeon Mountain Grotto, Clock Tower reported working with Georgia Department of Natural Resources with the anticipated result of opening several new caves for visitation

DCG – Cleaned-up the roadside around Sues Market; proceeds from the TAG Fall Cave-In resulted in donations of over \$9,000 to various caving organizations and causes (this totals to about \$130,000 given since 1996), Christine Bowdee is Chairman this year, they meet at the REI Store with about 60 people per meeting and a total of 130 members

ETG – Meetings are held at the Oak Ridge Civic Center, grotto cleaned-up Grassy Cove Saltpeter Cave, surveyed in Cumberland Gap Cave, cleaned-up and surveyed Toilet Bowl Cave, they hosted the NSS Board of Governors Meeting, they help lead tours of Cherokee Caverns, they checked Poplar Creek Cave for rock art and fossils, and they monitored Berry Cave for ash impacts from TVA's Kingston Steam Plant coal ash spill

GSS – Resurvey of Fricks Cave and finding new passage, Fricks now closed, GSS jackets for sale

Huntsville – Attendance at meetings is about 60 people, the grotto is very educational to new cavers, the grotto hosts a horizontal and a vertical cave trip at a set time/weekend each month

Nashville – Many new faces in the grotto, about 35 people attend meetings, meetings are now the 3rd Thursday of the month, grotto is busy planning the 2009 SERA Summer Cave Carnival, manned an Earthday Booth in 2008 with about 5,000 people attending, the Spencer Sewage Treatment Plant saga is (somewhat) complete – the infiltration ponds are online, and the Agreed Order is vacated with all requirements fulfilled – the ponds already had a dropout occur, and the resolution is 7 years behind schedule due in part to 3rd-party intervention from the local district State Representative sending the agreed remedy to the State Court of Appeals where the agreed remedy was struck down.

Sewanee – They meet the 2nd Saturday of the month at members houses. The meeting day consists of a cave trip, then dinner with a theme, the actual business meeting, and ends with a program. Typically, 20 – 25 people attend. Members published an article in the NSS News; surveyed 8 caves, with several on-going projects. The grotto hosted 2 clean-ups in the Russell Cave Watershed – one with the SKTF; also helped with the Blue Spring Watershed Clean-up and Horseshoe Bend Cave clean-up and assisted SMG with Grassy Cove clean-up. The grotto continues to recycle aluminum at SERA Summer Cave Carnival and TAG Fall Cave-In. PupFest 6 is planned for Labor Day Weekend; expecting 120 people; it is a free event, bring food to share and items for auction. The grotto is also planning to host a Pre-Camp for the International Congress of Speleology, and they will host the 2010 SERA Cave Carnival.

SMG – Less than 10 people show up for the meetings. Sevierville new cavers re-found Robinson Caves No. 1 and 2; they supplied the data to TCS, but there are landowner issues with the caves. The owner of Cuyler Cave died, but the cave is open again, contact Chris Kerr. Jan Simak is now president at UT. The grotto Post Office Box (82917) may be cut. New stuff found in Fentress County; grotto maintains communications with the Gurnts. Led clean-up at Grassy Cove Cave; held vertical training, and dye traced Meads Quarry Cave.

Southport – Grotto goes caving a lot. Meetings are the 1st Saturday of the month, consisting of a meeting (at roving locations) and then a cave trip. Several cave surveys are underway, and the grotto hosts a cave clean-up every year.

Spencer – Hosted clean-up of Blue Spring Watershed with SKTF; Loni Carr did a lot of work for the clean-up. New passage found in Blue Spring Cave. Grotto has t-shirts. Cumberland Caverns is under new ownership, and hosts bluegrass concerts in the cave on Saturdays (ED: delayed broadcast statewide on radio network). On behalf of Upper Cumberland Grotto, reported on rock hounds coming to meeting, and grotto took them caving.

TCS – Tennessee has about 9,300 caves. 210 caves >1mile (mostly by mapping short known caves that are longer than thought). Ken Oeser mapped Jackson Cave to about 4,000 feet; then Jason and Chrissy Richards dove the sump, and connected to another entrance, and the cave is over 2 miles long, now. The spring meeting will be April 4 at Sewanee, and 90 new caves turn-in this year.

SCCi – Made 2 acquisitions: Stewart Springs (AL) and Fern (AL); although, Fern is not signed, yet. Conservancy is still paying on properties and saving money for Fern. Several caves are closed due to White Nose Syndrome. The annual meeting will be at Stewart Springs on May 16.

Carrying-forward discussion issues from the morning session, Mudpuppy's motion to establish SERA policy to waive the SERA tax from the Summer Cave Carnival if the event is a net financial loss is withdrawn and dies for lack of a second. Chrys Hulbert motions, Mudpuppy seconds, for SERA to write a letter to MEG requesting a report and information regarding the event (focusing on lessons learned, what was right, what was wrong) and to forgive the tax as a result of the financial loss. The motion carries unanimously.

Maureen motions and Mudpuppy seconds to assign the task to the SERA Vice Chair to be liaison to the host organization to help ensure a successful event, support the efforts of smaller grottos, and implement findings and recommendations of the Enhancement Survey Committee. The Vice Chair would ask for volunteers to assist in this effort, and this new "committee" would establish a CUP-like (ED: an SKTF term) document that the potential host grotto would be required to fill-out.

After discussion, this motion is withdrawn, but John Attaway appoints Michael Gilbert and Nathan Gatlin to form a SERA Summer Cave Carnival Support Group to consolidate the Joop (2008) and Dougherty (1991) SERA Cave Carnival Surveys and establish a CUP-like document (ED: application?) that the potential host must complete. A question remains open whether the application must be approved, and by whom, in order to host the cave carnival.

Maureen (again) motions and Nancy Aulenbach seconds that the SERA Chairman (ED: annually?) appoint a liaison to the host grotto for implementation of the Cave Carnival application. This motion carries with 2 opposed.

John Attaway again calls for meritorious service awards; there are none. John then calls for nominations for SERA Vice Chairman. Michael Gilbert is nominated, he accepts, and is unanimously elected. John Hoffelt agrees to carry on with Secretary-Treasurer duties and is unanimously elected.

The SERA award committees met in private. The Map and Fine Arts Salon judging was finalized.

Jim Whidby led a tour of Cherokee Caverns for those not judging.

The evening banquet consisted of pulled-pork bar-b-que and fixin's from a local restaurant, and ETG brought homemade desserts. After dinner, award recipients were announced. Brent Aulenbach announced the map salon:

Julie Schenck Brown	Merit Award	Bo's Cave, Alabama, AJK-4273
Tom Moltz	Merit Award	Pettijohns Cave: Nervous Breakdown Room, Georgia, GWK-29
Julie Schenck Brown	Best of Show	Horseshoe Bend Pit, Tennessee, TMN-170

Lynn Roebuck announced the Fine Arts Salon:

Jim Whidby won all the award categories

John Attaway announced the SERA awards:

David McRae and the Birmingham Grotto received the Alex Harris Conservation Award

No recipients were selected for the other SERA awards.

Larry Matthews presented the evening program: "Historic Caves of Knoxville and the Great Smoky Mountains." The presentation consisted of the photos and stories from Larry's book of the same name.

This concluded the 2009 SERA Winter Business Meeting.

Respectfully Submitted,

John Hoffelt
Secretary-Treasurer
April 9, 2009

TREASURER REPORT

SOUTHEASTERN REGIONAL ASSOCIATION OF THE NSS

MARCH 7, 2009

BEGINNING BALANCE	\$739.32
(Balance Forward from Wilbanks to Hoffelt, June 9, 2008)	
INCOME (\$0.17)	
Interest	0.17
	Subtotal \$739.49
EXPENSES (\$273.83)	
NSS Webspace	12.00
SERA Admin (Ledger, Checks)	31.10
SERA Awards (Cash, Plaques)	230.73
ENDING BALANCE	\$465.66